diesel; assistance from Central Sector Schemes for better input distribution for kharif as well as rabi cultivation; providing technical know how through the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and the National Rainfed Area Authority (NRAA); allocation under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) for livelihood support; allocation of additional foodgrains and periodic monitoring and review at all levels of the Central and State Government on mitigation measures. The Government has also constituted an Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoM), which has been mandated to take decisions on policy issues and schemes required for effective management of drought/deficit rainfall and related issues.

More teeth to Directorate of Sugar

*126. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:
SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry has given more teeth to Directorate of Sugar;

(b) whether Government has also lifted the cap on refined sugar imports;

(c) whether non-payment of sugar arrears to farmers in the last two seasons has made them shift to other crops whose minimum support price was raised;

(d) if so, the concrete measures and steps Government proposes to take to improve sugar output and also help in growing sugarcane to meet sugar shortage; and

(e) to what extent these measures will help in improving sugar production?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) No, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) to (e) The delay in payment of cane price to sugarcane farmers in 2006-07 and 2007-08 sugar seasons (when there was excess production of sugar and prices of non-levy sugar declined in the market constraining capacities of sugar mills to pay cane price including cane price arrears) can possibly be one of the reasons for the decline in acreage of sugarcane and farmers shifting to other crops. To improve sugar output, the Central Government has permitted duty-free import of raw sugar upto December, 2010. Further, duty-free import of white/refined sugar upto 10 lac tons has also been permitted upto March, 2010. The details of measures taken to import raw and white/refined sugar are enclosed as Statement-I (*See* below). The Central Government has taken steps to help sugarcane farmers in growing sugarcane. The details of these measures are enclosed as Statement-II (*See* below). It is difficult to quantify as to what extent these measures will help in improving sugar and sugarcane production. However they would certainly help in increasing the sugar and sugarcane production.

Statement-I

Details of measures taken to import raw and white/refined sugar

- Allowed import of raw sugar under Advance Authorization Scheme by sugar mills at zero duty upto 30.09.2009.
- Allowed import of raw sugar at zero duty under O.G.L. upto 01.08.2009 by sugar mills, later extended upto 31.03.2010. This has now been further extended upto 31.12.2010 *vide* notification dated 11.11.2009.
- Import of raw sugar was opened to private trade upto 31.03.2010 for being processed by domestic factories on job basis. This has now been further extended upto 31.12.2010 *vide* notification dated 11.11.2009.
- Allowed duty free import of white/refined sugar by STC/MMTC/PEC and NAFED upto 1 million tons by 01.08.2009 which was extended upto 30.11.2009. Further, duty free import of white/refined sugar under OGL has also been opened to other Central/State Government agencies and to private trade in addition to existing designated agencies, upto 30.11.2009. This has now been extended upto 31.3.2010 *vide* notification dated 11.11.2009.
- Levy obligation has been removed in respect of all imported raw sugar and white/refined sugar. The white/refined sugar has been also allowed to be sold at the discretion of the importing organizations, but sugar processed from imported raw sugar is subject to accelerated releases.
- The levy obligation on sugar factories has been enhanced from 10% to 20% of production w.e.f 01.10.2009 for 2009-10 sugar season only, *vide* notification dated 7th October, 2009.

Statement-II

Steps taken by Central Government to help sugarcane farmers in growing sugarcane

(a) The Central Government has now fixed the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane payable by sugar mills for 2009-10 sugar season at Rs. 129.84 per quintal linked to a basic recovery rate of 9.5% subject to a premium of Rs. 1.37 per quintal for every 0.1 percentage point increase in recovery above that level. Hitherto, the Central Government was fixing the Statutory Minimum Price (SMP) of sugarcane. This FRP is substantially high over the SMP of 2008-09 sugar season which was Rs. 81.18 per quintal, with an additional premium of Rs. 0.90 for every 0.1% point increase in the recovery above 9%.

(b) The Sustainable Development of Sugarcane Based Cropping System (SUBACS) is one of the components of Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS), namely Revised Macro Management of Agriculture Scheme (RMMA). RMMA is implemented in all States and Union Territories of the country. The main thrust of SUBACS is on the transfer of improved

production technology to the farmers through field demonstrations, training of farmers, supply of farm implements, enhancing production of planting materials, efficient use of water, treatment of planting materials. During 2008-09, in all, 19 States implemented SUBACS.

(c) Concessional loans at an interest rate of 4% per annum are given to sugar factories from Sugar Development Fund (SDF) for modernization of plant and machinery, expansion of crushing capacity, utilization of by-products *viz.* baggasse for co-generation of power and molasses for production of ethanol, upgradation of technology and sugarcane development including better irrigation facilities, improved seed variety, ratoon management etc.

(d) A short term scheme has been announced for cane development in the current financial year under which loans of Rs. 1.0 to 2.5 crore will be available to sugar factories depending upon their crushing capacity, for purchase of seeds, fertilizers and pesticides etc. This loan is expected to be passed on to the farmers.

Regulator for grievances of prospective investors in steel industry

*127. SHRI JAI PRAKASH NARAYAN SINGH : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether there exists any statutory regulator to consider grievances of prospective investors in steel sector in the country;

(b) if not, the steps Government proposes to take in the matter; and

(c) the current mechanism to address the concerns of the steel industry?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL (SHRI VIRBHADRA SINGH): (a) No, Sir. There is no statutory regulator to consider the grievances of prospective investors in steel sector in the country.

(b) and (c) Steel sector in the country is deregulated and Government does not exercise any control over production, sale and price of steel products. The role of Government is that of a facilitator for an overall and healthy growth of steel sector in the country. In order to monitor and coordinate various issues, including state related issues concerning major steel investments in the country, an Inter Ministerial Group (IMG) has been constituted in the Ministry of Steel, under the Chairmanship of Secretary (Steel).

Decline in production of pulses

*128. SHRI MOINUL HASSAN : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that production of pulses in the country has been going down for the past several years;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the measures Government is planning to take to improve the production of pulses in the country?